

## Message Text

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67

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: ISRAEL AFTER ENTEBBE

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE ENTEBBE OPERATION HAS HAD A CATALYTIC EFFECT ON THE NATIONAL SPIRIT, REPLACING THE POSTWAR SENSE OF DRIFT AND PASSIVITY WITH RENEWED FEELING OF PRIDE AND CONFIDENCE. RABIN'S DOMESTIC STANDING HAS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED. HIS LEADERSHIP AND COOLNESS UNDER PRESSURE, AND HIS ABILITY TO MOLD THE GOVERNMENT, THE ARMY AND THE OPPOSITION INTO A NATIONAL TEAM IN A MOMENT OF EMERGENCY HAVE WON HIM PLAUDITS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. THE PUBLIC MOOD IS HAWKISH, WITH THE AIR FRANCE HIJACKING AND THE LEBANESE SITUATION REINFORCING DEEPLY-HELD CONVICTIONS ON THE INTRACTABILITY OF ARAB HOSTILITY TOWARD ISRAEL AND THE IMPOTENCE OF INTERNATIONAL BODIES. THERE IS TALK OF AN ISRAELI-COUNTER-TERRORIST OFFENSIVE AND FRESH DEBATE OVER THE DEATH PENALTY FOR CAPTURED TERRORISTS. RABIN'S STRENGTHENED POSITION MAY ENABLE HIM TO MOVE AGAINST THE ILLEGAL QADOUM SETTLER IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE

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NOW HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONSOLIDATE HIS HOLD OVER THE LABOR PARTY,

PARTICULARLY SINCE YADIN, DAYAN AND SHARON HAVE ALL LOST GROUND ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE. WHILE ENTEBBE HAS NOT ALTERED EITHER ISRAEL'S EXTERNAL SITUATION NOR INTERNAL DIVISIONS, IT HAS RESTORED PUBLIC MORALE AND CONFIDENCE THAT RABIN GOVT AND THE IDF CAN MEET THE CHALLENGES AHEAD. END SUMMARY.

1. NATIONAL MORALE. THE IDF RESCUE OPERATION AT ENTEBBE HAS HAD A DRAMATIC EFFECT ON THE PUBLIC MOOD, LIFTING THE NATION OVERNIGHT OUT OF THE DOLDRUMS. THE LINGERING TRAUMA OF THE OCTOBER WAR, THE SENSE THAT ISRAEL NO LONGER CAN CONTROL ITS DESTINY, HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A RENEWED SENSE OF NATIONAL CONFIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ARMY CAN ACT EFFECTIVELY IN CRISIS SITUATIONS. RABIN TOLD ISRAELIS IN A TV INTERVIEW THAT THEY SHOULD NOW RECOGNIZE THAT THE NATION IS STILL STRONG AND ITS LEADERSHIP CAPABLE OF DECISIVE ACTION. AT THE SAME TIME, HE WARNED AGAINST ANY FALSE EXPECTATION THAT A SINGLE OPERATION CAN BREAK THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS AND COUNSELLED INCREASED VIGILANCE. SOME POLITICAL COMMENTATORS ALSO HAVE WARNED AGAINST EXCESSIVE EUPHORIA AND A REVIVAL OF THE SUPERMAN COMPLEX AND ARROGANCE OF THE POST-1967 PERIOD.

2. RABIN'S STANDING. ENTEBBE HAS DOUBTELESS GIVEN A STRONG BOOST TO RABIN'S DOMESTIC POSITION. INEVITABLY NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUCCESS, BUT BEYOND THIS THERE IS A WIDESPREAD RECOGNITION THAT THE CHARGE LEVELLED AGAINST RABIN THAT HE CANNOT FUNCTION UNDER PRESSURE HAS BEEN EXPLODED AS AN UNFAIR MYTH. THE PUBLIC IS AWARE THAT RABIN MADE THE KEY DECISIONS AND THAT HIS WAS THE FINAL RESPONSIBILITY. HE PERFORMED COOLLY AND EFFECTIVELY IN A SITUATION FRAUGHT WITH DANGER NOT ONLY FOR THE LIVES OF THE HOSTAGES AND THE COMMANDOS BUT ALSO FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE GOVERNMENT. HIS ANALYTICAL QUALITIES AND LONG MILITARY EXPERIENCE CLEARLY PROVED THEMSELVES IN THE ENTEBBE DECISIONS. IN ADDITION, RABIN DEMONSTRATED HIS ABILITY TO WELD THE MINISTERIAL TEAM AND THE IDF LEADERSHIP INTO A COORDINATED AND SMOOTHLY-FUNCTIONING BODY. IN A CRUNCH, THE GOVERNMENT

SHOWED THAT IT CAN OVERCOME PERSONALITY SQUABBLES AND IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AND AVOID "LEAKS".

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3. THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRORISM. THE IMMEDIATE RESULT OF ENTEBBE HAS BEEN TO FOCUS GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ATTENTION ONCE AGAIN ON THE PROBLEM OF HOW BEST TO MEET THE TERRORIST CHALLENGES. IN THE KNESSET AND THE PRESS THE DEBATE OVER WHETHER TO APPLY THE DEATH PENALTY TO CAPTURED TERRORISTS IS IN FULL SWING, AND THE MATTER IS ALSO DUE TO BE DISCUSSED IN THE CABINET. THE PROponents OF THE DEATH PENALTY ARGUE THAT IT IS BOTH A JUST PUNISHMENT AND A DETERRENT WHILE OPPONENTS MAINTAIN THAT THE JAILED TERRORISTS CAN BETTER BE

USED AS NEGOTIATING PAWNS AND THAT IN ANY CASE THEY CANNOT ALL BE EXECUTED (ARCHBISHOP CAPUCCI, FOR INSTANCE, IS NOT CHARGED WITH A CAPITAL OFFENSE) NOR WOULD THEIR EXECUTIONS PREVENT TERRORISTS FROM SEIZING HOSTAGES FOR OTHER DEMANDS. BEYOND THIS DEBATE, THERE IS ALSO CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION IN GOVERNMENT AND ARMY CIRCLES OF THE NEED FOR AN ANTI-TERRORIST COUNTER OFFENSIVE. WHILE NO FIRM DECISIONS HAVE YET BEEN TAKEN, THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT ISRAEL MAY NOW UNDERTAKE CERTAIN COUNTER-TERRORIST OPERATIONS OF ITS OWN.

4. GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING. THE ENTEBBE OPERATION APPEARS TO HAVE GIVEN THE RABIN GOVERNMENT NEW SELF-CONFIDENCE, A FEELING THAT IT DOES NOT SIMPLY HAVE TO BE ON THE DEFENSIVE AGAINST PRESS ATTACKS AND CRITICISM FROM ABROAD. THIS IN TURN MAY MAKE IT SOMEWHAT EASIER FOR IT TO TAKE SOME HARD AND UNPOPULAR DECISIONS. THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE AT HAND IS THE ILLEGAL SETTLEMENT AT QADOUM ON THE WEST BANK. ACCORDING TO ONE USUALLY WELL-INFORMED COMMENTATOR RABIN TOLD CLOSE ASSOCIATES THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO BRING ABOUT A DECISION ON QADOUM WITHIN THE NEXT TEN DAYS, PERHAPS AT THE JULY 18 CABINET MEETING. (FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON IS SAID TO BELIEVE THAT THE DECISION WOULD COME IN A FEW WEEKS.)

5. FOREIGN POLICY. ENTEBBE WILL NOT ALTER THE BASIC FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH OF THE RABIN GOVERNMENT. INDEED, THE AIR FRANCE HIJACKING AND THE CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION IN LEBANON HAVE REINFORCED THE VIEW THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CAREFUL APPROACH-- COMBINING READINESS FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH CONTINUING MILITARY PREPAREDNESS--IS THE CORRECT ONE. THE PUBLIC MOOD IS MORE HAWKISH THAN

THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT AS THE LEATEST EVENTS HAVE REINFORCED THE WIDELY-HELD VIEW THAT THE ARABS REMAIN UNPREPARED TO MOVE FORWARD TOWARD A NEGOTIATED PEACE SETTLEMENT. THE EGYPTIAN DENUNCIATION OF THE IDF RESCUE OPERATION HAS COME IN FOR STRONG CRITICISM AS A CONFIDENTIAL

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VIOLATION OF ITS SINAI II UNDERTAKINGS TO REDUCE POLITICAL WARFARE AGAINST ISRAEL.

6. ISRAEL AND THE LEBANON. AS THE LEBANESE WAR DRAGS ON AND CASUALTIES MOUNT, THE MAJOR ISRAELI CONCERN FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IS THE PRESERVATION AND CONTINUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. THE RECENT COMBINED SYRIAN/CHRISTIAN OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE LEFTISTS AND THE PLO HAS ENCOURAGED ISRAELI LEADERS. FOR THE LONGER RUN, HOWEVER, THERE IS PROFOUND CONCERN THAT UNLESS A POLITICAL SOLUTION IS ATTAINED WHICH WILL GUARANTEE THE POLITICAL AUTONOMY AND RIGHTS OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY THE LEBANON WILL EVENTUALLY TURN INTO A MOSLEM CONFRONTATION STATE UNDER DIRECT OR INDIRECT SYRIAN CONTROL. THE PROFOUND DISARRAY IN THE ARAB WORLD OVER THE LEBANESE SITUATION AND THE RATHER SURPRISING SYRIAN/CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE, HAVE REINFORCED THE VIEW HERE THAT A

STRONG SELF-DEFENSE CAPACITY IS MORE ESSENTIAL THAN EVER FOR SMALL NON-MOSLEM STATES SUCH AS ISRAEL. THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO SHOW RESTRAINT IN ITS PUBLIC DECLARATIONS REGARDING THE LEBANON AND HAS ALSO UNDERTAKEN A SIGICANT HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVE BY OPENING UP A CLINIC ON THE BORDER FOR TREATMENT OF SICK AND INJURED LEBANESE. ISRAEL IS ALSO MARKETING TOBACCO AND OTHER COMMODITIES BEING CULTIVATED IN SOUTHERN LEBANON FOR WHICH THERE IS NO LONGER AN INTERNAL LEBANESE MARKET.

7. DOMESTIC. ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, AS ONE OBSERVER HAS PUT IT, ENTEBBE HAS MARKED THE BEGINNING OF A NEW RABIN ERA. RABIN IS NOW RIDING ON THE CREST OF A WAVE OF PUBLIC POPULARITY. HIS PUTATIVE RIVALS ARE IN THE SHADOWS WHILE HE ENJOYS THE LIMELIGHT. YADIN MADE THE MISTAKE OF CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT BEFORE THE OUTCOME WAS CLEAR. DAYAN AND SHARON, NOTED IN SOME QUARTERS FOR THEIR DECISIVENESS, PLAYED NO ROLE IN THE ENTEBBE CRISIS AND THEIR STARS HAVE DIMMED AS RABIN'S HAS BRIGHTENED WITH PROOF THAT HE CAN ACT SWIFTLY AND SURELY. RABIN NOW HAS THE CHANCE OVER THE LABOR PARTY BEFORE ITS INTERNAL ELECTIONS AND CONVENTION.

8. CONCLUSION. ENTEBBE HAS NOT CHANGED THE CONSTELLATION OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES FACING THE RABIN GOVERNMENT. NOR HAS IT AFFECTED THE DEEP NATIONAL SCHISM OVER ISSUES SUCH AS THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, THE DISPOSITION OF THE OCCUPIED  
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TERRITORIES, OR THE LOCATION OF DEFENSIBLE BORDERS. BUT FOR NOW THE NATION IS AGAIN UNITED, CONFIDENT OF ITS LEADERSHIP AND ARMY, DEFIANT OF THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, AND PROUD OF ITS IMAGE AND ROLE IN THE FREE WORLD. IN SUM, ISRAEL'S POLITICAL SITUATION HAS NOT CHANGED BUT IS NATIONAL PSYCHE IN THE FACE OF THAT SITUATION HAS BEEN PROFOUNDLY ALTERED.  
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